

# CONSUMER BEHAVIOR ON THE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES MARKET

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*In the past years the intensification of competition has changed the way in which companies communicate with their customers. The main challenge doesn't represent anymore to create good products but also to be able to sell them. The best marketing strategy of a company can be best developed if the needs and the behavior of the consumer are known. In this paper there are analyzed the results of a research about the behavior of consumer towards fruits and vegetables. The research was done in the period December 2010 – February 2011 on 146 respondents regarding the buying behavior of consumers at retailers. The focus in the research is put on the cognitive and emotional reactions consumers have when they make the buying decision and consisted out of an observation and a survey. In this article there are presented both aspects regarding the observed behavior towards fruits and vegetables and the motives which led to this behavior. Depending on these results, there are presented the implications of this behavior on the marketing strategy of a company.*

*Key Words: consumer behavior, emotional and cognitive reactions, fruits and vegetables market*

## **1. Introduction**

Because of the intensification of competition on markets, one of the biggest challenges of companies nowadays is to convince the consumers to buy their products. Especially on a market such as the fruits and vegetables market with easy perishable products a company should know what type of instruments it should apply in order to convince the consumer to buy the products in the right time, before their natural deterioration. For this reason it is important to analyze the behavior of the consumers and their motives to buy these products, in order to be able to influence their decision and implement efficient marketing instruments.

In this article there are presented the results of a research regarding the behavior of consumers towards fruits and vegetables. There is analyzed the type of behavior the consumers have towards fruits and vegetables as for instance a habitualized behavior, analytical behavior or an impulsive behavior. Besides this there are analyzed the motives which the consumer has in order to buy the products and the elements which influence the buying decision.

## **2. The particularities of the fruits and vegetables market**

The market for fruits and vegetables is a market with many particularities because of the fact that the products are easy perishable and because they represent an important nutritional component for the consumers. Because of these aspects, the market for fruits and vegetables has a lot of challenges from its production process until the distribution to the final consumers.

The challenge in the production process of the fruits and vegetables represents the quality of the products. According to Boboc, there are two aspects of quality. On one hand the quality of fruits and vegetables regarding their content, especially the elimination of undesired substances such as chemicals, bacteria and other substances used during the production process (Boboc, pg. 4). Another aspect which should be taken in consideration is the pollution from the external environment such as the soil, air or even rain which is difficult to influence. On the other hand,

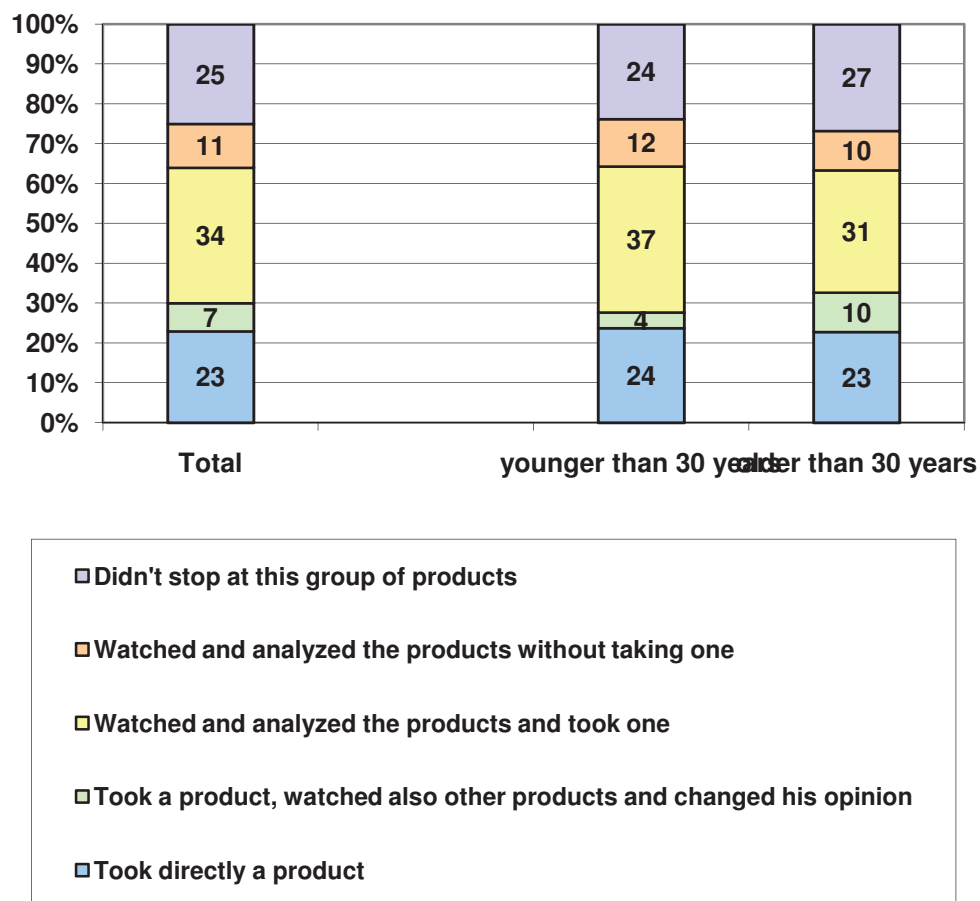
from the point of view of the consumer, the quality of the product represents the subjective opinion on taste or even on aspect. In order to assure the quality of the agri-food products, there have been developed a series of reglementations both at the level of the European Union and on a national level. All these reglementations should assure the safety and the quality of fruits and vegetables and they should be taken in consideration by the companies which work in this field. From a point of view of the logistics of a company or a farmer for fruits and vegetables, the big challenge represents to bring the easy perishable products in the right time to the consumer, without damaging the quality of the products. On one hand these companies have to have well developed logistics systems in order to assure the transportation of the products in good conditions. On the other hand they have to assure the adequate storage conditions in order to keep the quality of the products, because of the fact that the quality of fruits and vegetables, as for any other natural product, deteriorates in time. The last provocation of the companies is to convince the customers to buy and consume the products in the right time before their natural deterioration. For this reason they have to develop a good sales plan and to find the right marketing instruments in order to convince the consumers to buy the products.

### **3. The behavior of the Romanian consumers regarding fruits and vegetables**

In order to determine the behavior of the consumer regarding fruits and vegetables, an experiment was done. The objective of the experiment was to analyze and explore the cognitive and emotional reactions in the buying behavior and to determine their rationality from the point of view of the consumer. It consisted out of three parts. The initial part questioned the respondents on their initial purpose and desires of the buying process such as the products he wanted to buy, the amount of money, he wanted to spend and so on. The second part consisted out of an observation regarding the buying behavior. There were analyzed the reactions in the buying process for several product groups. The third part included a survey, which should explain the aspects observed in the previous part, regarding the motives of buying the products. In this article there are presented only the results regarding the cognitive and emotional reactions towards fruits and vegetables.

The marketing-experiment was conducted in the period December 2010 – February 2011 in different retail formats in the main cities of Romania. There were observed 146 persons, which were chosen randomly by the interviewer. The only aspect which was considered in the marketing-experiment was that the number of female respondents should be equal to the number of male respondents. This condition was put, because previous researches and studies have shown that the buying behavior of women and men differs.

In this article there are presented the results of the research which analyze the behavior of the consumer regarding fruits and vegetables. There are presented both the results of the observation regarding the buying decision of the consumer in the case of fruits and vegetables and the motives which the consumer have in order to buy this type of products. In this article there are analyzed both results, because the observation shows an external point of view regarding the behavior of the consumer, while the results of the survey show the motives which the consumer have in order to buy the products. In fig. 1 there can be observed the results of the observation regarding the behavior of the consumer regarding fruits and vegetables.

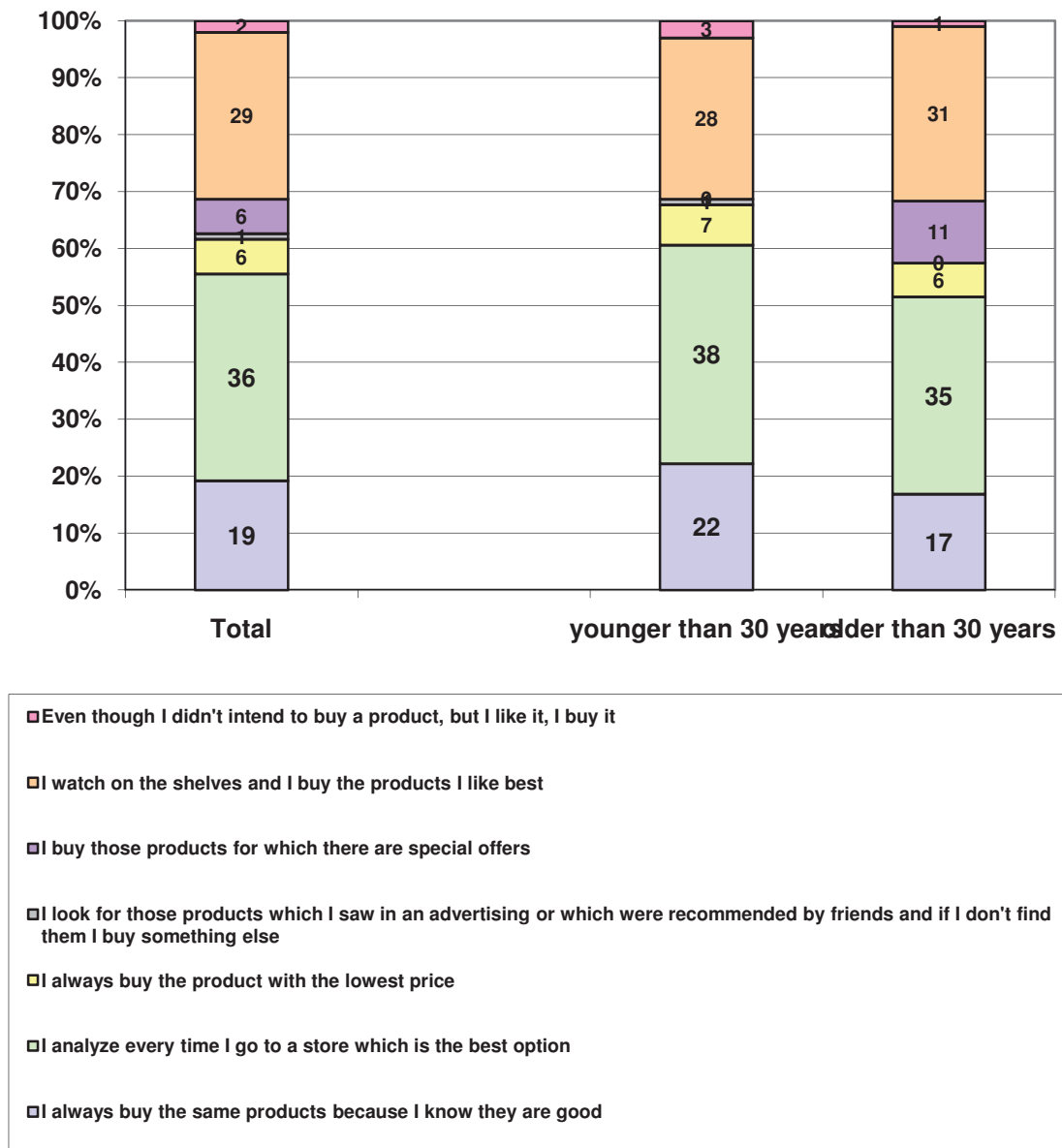


**Fig. 1. Results of the observation regarding the buying behavior of fruits and vegetables**

As it can be observed in fig. 1, 25% of the respondents didn't stop at this group of products. This percentage is higher for the respondents older than 30 years (27%) than for the people younger than 30 years (24%). 11% of the respondents has analyzed the group of products of fruits and vegetables but didn't buy any. This percentage is higher for the people younger than 30 years than the people older than 30 years. This can be explained by the fact that this group of respondents had the intention to buy the products but it wasn't convinced by the products. 34% of the respondents analyze the products before they buy it. The percentage for this type of behavior is higher for the younger people (37%) than for the older people (31%). 7% of the respondents are not very decided on the products they have bought. This group of respondents has changed their decision during the buying process. This percentage is higher for the elder people (10%), which shows a higher degree of undecided people. 23% of the respondents have a habitualized buying behavior regarding fruits and vegetables. They take directly the products they need, without analyzing too much. In this case there is no much difference between people of different ages.

The results of the observation show that most of the people analyze the fruits and vegetables during the buying process. More than 50% of the respondents analyze the products while buying them. For this reason, in order to sell this type of products, it is important that the products should have a good and appealing aspect. Even though the behavior of the consumer differs, most of the consumers analyze the products while buying them.

In fig. 2. there are analyzed the motives which support the buying behavior observed in fig. 1.



**Fig. 2. The buying motives of consumers regarding fruits and vegetables**

As it can be observed in fig. 2, 19% of the respondents have a habitualized buying behavior regarding fruits and vegetables. They buy most of the time the same products without analyzing too much the products. This percentage is higher for the younger people (22%) than the older people (17%). The fact that people analyze the fruits and vegetables they buy, is also confirmed by their statements. 36% of the respondents say that they analyze the best option every time they have to make a buying decision. This percentage is higher for younger people (38%) than for older people (35%). 6% of the respondents base their buying decision regarding fruits and vegetables on the price. So the analysis is not based on the best products, but on the lowest price. This characteristics is valid both for younger and older people.

The results of the experiment show that the population is not very much influenced by advertising campaigns or friends in their buying decision regarding fruits and vegetables. This shows that the buying decision is taken in the store. The influence is slightly higher for younger people (1%) than for older people (0%). In comparison to that, people older than 30 years are more influenced by special offers in the store than younger people. So 11% of the older people are influenced by special offers, while almost none of the people younger than 30 years are influenced by special offers for the products group fruits and vegetables.

29% of the respondents state that they buy the fruits and vegetables which they like most. Consequently their buying decision is much influenced by the aspect of the products. This type of decision is an analytical one, but it also contains some emotional subjective aspects like the liking of the product. This percentage is higher for older people (31%) than for younger people (28%). 2% of the respondents have a pure emotional-impulsive behavior by buying the fruits and vegetables they like, although they didn't have this intention at the beginning. This percentage is higher for younger people (3%) than for older people (1%).

As a conclusion it can be stated that most of the consumer make their buying decision regarding fruits and vegetables based on an analysis. The results of the survey shows that the analysis is based both on cognitive and emotional elements. Consequently, some of the consumers make their decision based on cognitive elements as for instance the price or the best option. Other consumers make their decision based on emotional factors as for instance the fruits and vegetables they like best. For this reason the producers and the retailers should adjust their marketing strategy in order to convince the consumers to buy the fruits and vegetables. As it can be observed in the research, the consumers are not very much influenced by advertising or other campaigns in the case of fruits and vegetables. In this case the decision is taken in the store, so both the producers and the retailers of fruits and vegetables should take care of the sales instruments they apply in the store. On one hand the aspect of the fruits and vegetables in the store is very important, because many consumers analyze the products and they take the one that they like best. Taken in consideration the fact that fruits and vegetables are easy perishable products the retailers should concentrate their attention on how to keep the products fresh in a natural way, without damaging the quality of the product. On the other hand retailers and producers should adjust their marketing instruments in the store in order to convince the consumer to buy the products. They can adjust the prices for products which are easy perishable in order to optimize the buying process and even to convince the consumers to buy the products

#### **4. Conclusions**

The research regarding the consumer behavior shows that most of the consumers have a rather analytical behavior regarding fruits and vegetables. Most of them analyze the product, although the reasons behind the analysis differ. Some of the decisions are based on cognitive aspects such as the best price or the best alternative, while other are based on emotional elements such as the product which is liked best. Based on this behavior a company can adjust their marketing strategy. The results of the research show that the decision of the consumer regarding fruits and vegetables is taken in the store and not previous to the buying decision. For this reason, the focus of the marketing strategy of a company which sells fruits and vegetables should be on instruments at the point of sale. Only by using the instruments at which a company reacts, can increase the success of that company.

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